UNITED
NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/CHN/3-4
10 June 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: CHINESE

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
(CEDAW)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Third and fourth periodic reports of States parties

CHINA*

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of China, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.14; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.33, CEDAW/C/SR.34 and CEDAW/C/SR.36, and Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-ninth session, Supplement No. 45 (A/39/45), paras. 125-180. For the second periodic reports submitted by the Government of China, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.236; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.195, and Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38), paras. 145-218.

97-18309 (E) 070199 070199

/...

INTRODUCTION

1. China ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Convention) in 1980. This report, submitted in accordance with article 18 of the Convention, is China's combined third and fourth periodic reports to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. China submitted its initial periodic report in 1985; its second report, submitted in 1989, was considered in 1992. Because the country was preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, China was unable to submit its third report on time; it is for this reason that its third and fourth periodic reports are being submitted as one.

3. This report covers China's implementation of the Convention from the time its second periodic report was submitted in 1989 until 1995, with particular emphasis on the period following the consideration of that report by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1992.

4. This report comprises three parts: Part I presents basic facts and figures about Chinese women; Part II describes China's implementation of the Convention; and Part III outlines the actions and measures taken by the Chinese Government to follow up the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

5. The People's Republic of China wishes to reiterate its continued reservation to article 29, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

PART I

CHINESE WOMEN: BASIC FACTS AND FIGURES

In March 1992, the decision of the United Nations to convene the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the capital of China, in 1995 focused the world's attention on the situation of Chinese women.

Chinese women were long subject to humiliation and brutal oppression in a feudal and, subsequently, semi-feudal, semi-colonial society. It was not until the founding of the People's Republic of China that Chinese women, who make up one quarter of the world's female population, achieved their historic liberation.

New China has proclaimed that women enjoy equal rights with men in the political, economic, cultural, and social spheres as well as in family life, and has made them masters of the State and society. China's laws guarantee women equality with men in the enjoyment of rights, status, personal honour and dignity. The Chinese Government employs legal, administrative and educational means to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and protect their special rights and interests, allowing them to give utmost play to their intelligence and talents. As masters of their own minds, Chinese women actively participate in national development and have made important contributions in the areas of industry and agriculture, science, culture, education, and public health. At the same time, great changes have taken place in the mental outlook of Chinese women, whose spirit of self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement has enabled them to make substantial progress in political participation, education, scientific knowledge and production skills.

China is a developing country, hampered by its level of economic and social development as well as by traditional attitudes. In real life, Chinese women's equal rights to political participation, employment and education as well as in marriage and family life have yet to be fully realized. Disrespect for and discrimination against women, and even violations of their rights and interests, are not uncommon, and the overall talents and abilities of China's women also need further improvement.

The Chinese Government has dedicated itself to developing the economy, strengthening the legal system, eliminating all backward ideas that discriminate against women and fulfilling the strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

As of 1995, China had a total population of 1.2 billion, of which 48.97 per cent were women. The country's birth rate was 17.19 per 1,000, the death rate was 6.57 per 1,000 and the natural growth rate was 10.55 per 1,000. Life expectancy was 72 years for women and 69 years for men. China now has 320 million families, with about 10 million newlyweds forming families every year. The country's current divorce rate is 1.54 per 1,000.

Political participation

When the First National People's Congress (NPC) was held in 1954, there were 147 women deputies, accounting for 12 per cent of the total. When the Eighth NPC was held in 1993, the number of women deputies had increased to 626, or 21.03 per cent of the total. The Eighth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) had 283 women deputies, or 13.52 per cent of the total. At present China has three women ministers and 14 women vice-ministers in the central Government, 23 women deputy provincial governors, and 375 women mayors or deputy mayors of its more than 640 cities. Women make up about 33 per cent of the total government workforce.

China has also had one woman State Vice-President and honorary State President, as well as two women Vice-Premiers and two women State Councillors.

China attaches great importance to the training of women cadres from ethnic minorities. By 1992, the country had 607,600 such women cadres, accounting for 26.6 per cent of the total. There were 106 women deputies to the Eighth NPC from ethnic minorities, accounting for 17 per cent of all women deputies, and three of them were elected members of the NPC Standing Committee.

Education

Urban women in China complete an average of 9.97 years of schooling, with 56.3 per cent completing their education at the senior middle-school or higher levels, 33.3 per cent at the junior middle-school level and 8.3 per cent at the primary-school level; only 2.1 per cent are illiterate or semi-literate. The corresponding figures for rural women are 8.9 per cent, 26.6 per cent, 27.9 per cent, and 36.6 per cent respectively.

Health care

China has incorporated maternal and child health care into its Ninth Five-Year Plan for Social and Economic Development (1996-2000), which calls for increased investment in maternal and child care and greater efforts to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and the incidence of neonatal defects. In 1995, China's maternal and infant mortality rates were 15-30 per cent and 520 per cent lower, respectively, than those of 1990. In recent years, China's maternal mortality rate has decreased by an average of 6-7 per 100,000 each year.

China's medical and health care is focused primarily on rural areas. The three-tiered (county, township and village) maternal and child health-care network has played an enormously important role in ensuring rural women's health. In 1995, maternal and infant mortality rates were 67.3 per 100,000 and 45.7 per 1,000 respectively (compared with 1,500 per 100,000 and 250 per 1,000 in the initial years after the founding of the People's Republic). Once-common or chronic diseases affecting rural women have largely been brought under control. Scientific information about hygiene has also been disseminated extensively in rural areas.

Employment

During the period of the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1991-1995), China's labour and employment structure underwent marked changes as a result of rapid economic growth. These improvements were most evident in the ever-increasing proportion of women in the work force. By the end of 1994 China had 270 million women employed, accounting for 44.8 per cent of the total labour force and representing a slight increase over the 1990 figure of 44.6 per cent. The Government attaches great importance to women's employment, and as physical-strength requirements of jobs become less important with the widespread adoption of new technologies, more jobs are becoming available to women.

During the period of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000), China will pursue a policy of guidance and support, with the assistance of society at large, to encourage workers to seek employment on their own, thereby transforming the current employment structure in which workers rely mainly on large and medium-sized State-owned enterprises for employment. During this period, great effort will be made to develop workers' job skills and enhance the calibre of the labour market. By the year 2000, the urban jobless rate will be held to approximately 4 per cent. These policies will also have a positive impact on women's employment rates as well as on the re-employment of laid-off women workers.

PART II

Article 2

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the country's Constitution established legal rights for women and men in such areas as political, economic, social, cultural and family life. Over succeeding decades, the laws and regulations aimed at protecting the legitimate rights and interests of women have undergone continuous improvement. Since 1992, a series of important laws and related programme documents pertaining to the protection of women's rights and interests have been adopted, including the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women Act of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the Women's Act), the Labour Act, the Maternal and Infant Health Care Act and the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000) (hereinafter referred to as the Programme). The Women's Act and the Programme are of great significance in the history of the Chinese women's movement; their far-reaching influence has been reflected in the further elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the enhancement of women's status and roles, and the establishment of a healthy social climate in which women enjoy respect and protection. The State attaches a high degree of significance to these two documents, which represent a new effort by the Government to further change the situation of women in China.

A. Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women Act of the People's Republic of China (Women's Act)

The Women's Act was adopted by the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China in April 1992 and entered into force throughout the country in October of that year. It is China's first basic law to deal with women's rights and interests in a specific and systematic manner. Covering all aspects of women's social and productive life, the Act sets out the political, cultural, educational, labour and economic rights of women, as well as their rights with regard to marriage, family and the person. The Act also stresses the obligations and legal responsibilities of the State. Containing elements added in response to new circumstances, the Women's Act is more comprehensive in scope and in its provisions for the special protection of women than was previously legislated.

1. In response to new situations and problems involving violations of women's rights and interests that have become common in recent years in both rural and urban areas, the Women's Act clearly stipulates, for example, that women enjoy rights equal with those of men in the distribution of land under the household contract responsibility system, as well as in the allocation of private plots for growing crops or building houses.

2. The Act emphasizes the special protection of women's rights and interests, a multifaceted task. In response to the fact that the equality of men and women has yet to be fully recognized by society and that inequalities between them exist in real life, the Act contains new provisions for women's participation in political activities, appointment to professional positions, and employment and protection in the labour sector, as well as marriage, and has become a vehicle for actively promoting these provisions.

3. The protection of women's rights and interests is a responsibility shared by society as a whole. The Women's Act stipulates that government agencies, social organizations, enterprises, institutions and grass-roots organizations in urban and rural areas shall ensure that women are able to exercise their rights under the law, and that the State shall create the conditions necessary for them to do so. In particular, it stipulates that women's organizations, such as the All-China Women's Federation, may hear complaints from women whose rights and interests have been violated and demand that their cases be investigated and dealt with by the relevant authorities.

4. The Act stipulates that all levels of the Government are responsible for coordinating, examining and supervising the work of the relevant departments in protecting women's rights and interests.

5. The Act encourages women to improve and protect themselves by calling on women to cultivate self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, to use legal means to protect their lawful rights and interests, to respect laws and social morality and to discharge their legal obligations.

The Chinese Government has taken the following measures to ensure the implementation of the Women's Act:

1. Establishment of specialized agencies to implement the Women's Act

In February 1990, the State Council established a working committee on women and children and entrusted it with coordinating the work of government departments to protect the rights and interests of women and children and providing practical and beneficial services for them. The committee formulates and implements programmes for women's development, provides the necessary human, material and financial resources for activities serving women and children, and coordinates inter-agency implementation of the Women's Act. To implement the Act, the People's Governments of 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly administered by the central Government have set up working committees on women and children or committees on the protection of women's rights and interests. The People's Governments at the local (municipal), county (district), and township (town) levels in most of the country have also established agencies for this purpose. These central and local government agencies are responsible for implementing the Women's Act and other laws and regulations concerning the protection of women's rights and interests.

2. Formulation of specific implementation measures

Almost all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly administered by the central Government have developed and promulgated specific methods of implementing the Women's Act in the light of the particular conditions and needs of women in those areas. For example, the programme developed by Liaoning Province stipulates that in elections to the local People's Congress, at least 25 per cent of the candidates nominated for the post of deputy must be women, and that People's Governments at all levels must heed the views of women's organizations when formulating economic and social development programmes and policies that affect women's rights and interests. The Qinghai provincial programme inter alia repudiates the practices of declining to hire women on gender grounds, dismissing or discriminating against women workers or setting unduly high criteria for women employees in hiring and job reclassification, and prohibits efforts to prevent divorced women or widows from retaining their personal property when they remarry.

3. Nationwide legal-awareness campaigns

During 1991-1995, the Chinese Government carried out the Second Five-Year Legal Awareness Campaign, which required that all citizens should be made aware of the 10 basic laws of the People's Republic, including the Constitution, the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Civil Code, the Marriage Act and, later, the Women's Act. This was the second time China had conducted a nationwide education campaign to increase public awareness of the laws (the first campaign was mentioned in the report). In addition, the All-China Women's Federation, the largest women's organization in the country, formulated, in the light of the prevailing conditions, a programme for promoting legal awareness among urban and rural women as a complement to the Second Five-Year Legal Awareness Campaign.

This effort to promote awareness of the law was conducted among populations of different social, educational and occupational backgrounds by means of radio,

television, publicity materials and other forms of public information likely to be accepted by women and to contribute to their self-improvement. Cultural performances, story-telling parties, public lectures, study seminars, training courses and consulting activities were also held to respond to queries from women and the general public. According to preliminary statistics, more than 85 per cent of women benefited from the various activities of the Campaign, and this figure was as high as 95 per cent in some regions.

4. Review and monitoring of implementation

People's Congresses and their deputies at various levels all bear responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the Women's Act. Joint teams consisting of deputies to the NPC and members of relevant agencies have conducted several such reviews, and many local Governments have also organized events to summarize and share their experiences in implementing the Act.

As a result of these activities, Chinese women's legal awareness has been remarkably enhanced. Not only do they study, understand and observe the law, they are now able to use legal means to protect their lawful rights and interests and to combat unlawful and criminal acts.

The above-mentioned measures have facilitated the dissemination, popularization and implementation of the Women's Act. The achievement of true gender equality, however, remains a long and arduous task. Increasing public awareness of the Women's Act, particularly in remote and backward regions, can only be a long-term project owing to constraints imposed by economic and cultural underdevelopment. Many law enforcement problems persist, however, including serious violations of women's rights and interests. In the future, the Chinese Government and all sectors of society will strive assiduously to carry out the Third Five-Year Legal Awareness Campaign (1996-2000), with emphasis on increasing public awareness of the Women's Act, the Labour Code and the Maternal and Infant Health Care Act, particularly among women in remote areas.

B. The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000)

The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women, which was approved by the State Council on 27 July 1995 for implementation throughout the country, is the first comprehensive programme of its kind ever promulgated by the Chinese Government.

Proceeding from China's national conditions, the Programme sets out 11 objectives to be met by the end of the twentieth century with respect to women's political participation, employment, labour protection, education, health care, poverty alleviation and rights of the person, as well as related policies and measures for their achievement. The Programme stresses the need for solving the new problems facing Chinese women in the course of reform, liberalization and the establishment of a socialist market-economy structure, and clearly defines priority areas for development; it highlights the need to improve women's talents and abilities as a whole and increase their participation in development while emphasizing the importance of helping women in remote, poor and ethnic

minority-inhabited areas, and protecting the special interests of young girls and elderly or disabled women. On the whole, the document is aimed at upholding the legitimate rights and interests of women, promoting their overall development, and standardizing and guiding women's work in China.

As defined by the Programme, the general objective for the development of Chinese women to the year 2000 is to markedly improve women's overall calibre and to further secure their equal rights, as provided for by law, in political, economic, cultural, social and family life in the context of their all-round participation in economic and social development and of the management of State and social affairs.

Specific objectives are:

1. To actively help poor women shake off poverty by providing basic education and technical training to women in poor regions: 10 million women will be given special technical training thorough general training programmes so that they can master at least one practical skill. There will be, on average, one agricultural technician in every village. Women-centred economic entities dealing with poverty alleviation will be developed in poor regions to provide jobs for poor women, so that by the end of this century their food and clothing needs will basically be met.

2. To increase women's participation in the decision-making process and in the management of State and social affairs: China will ensure that there are women members in leading Government bodies at all levels, as well as a considerable increase in the percentage of women in leadership of government agencies. Women will be organized to take an active part in social development through the creation of more jobs and a broadening of the range of employment opportunities available to women.

3. To actively develop women's education and raise their abilities in the scientific and cultural spheres by gradually increasing the percentage of women receiving education in various forms and at different levels: the nine-year compulsory education programme will be extended throughout the country and the drop-out rate for school-age girls will be brought below 2 per cent. The number of illiterate women will also be reduced by 3 million every year so that illiteracy will be basically eliminated among young and middle-aged women by the end of the century.

4. To improving women's health further while guaranteeing their right to family planning. The capacity and service quality of maternal and child-care facilities will be improved so that all urban and rural women may enjoy health care, including sound reproductive health care. The coverage rate for maternal health care and education will reach 85 per cent and the death rate for women in childbirth will be reduced by 50 per cent from its 1990 figure.

5. To formulate practical and operable administrative regulations and appropriate policy measures that are consistent with the Constitution and the Women's Act in order to enforce laws protecting women's rights and interests more effectively. Violence against women and violations of their rights and interests will be reduced, and degrading and insulting depictions of women in

films, television programmes, newspapers and periodicals will be banned. A variety of intensive public education programmes will be carried out through various channels to increase awareness of the law throughout society, promoting respect for women and the protection of their rights and interests through law so as to help them safeguard their rights and interests by legal means.

Article 3

As noted in the section on article 2, it is to ensure women's full development, progress and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of gender equality that China has promulgated a series of laws and regulations regarding women's rights and interests. The Protection of Disabled Persons Act of the People's Republic of China and the Protection of Minors Act of the People's Republic of China, promulgated in 1990 and 1991, respectively, are not targeted at women in particular. However, since women constitute a considerable portion of both special groups, the two laws have had the effect of ensuring their enjoyment of the rights that normal persons are entitled to and also of providing special measures for their protection in the light of their actual circumstances. These provisions deal with problems in such areas as the rehabilitation, employment, welfare and cultural life of disabled persons and the judicial, social, family and school protection of minors. Moreover, the Labour Code and the Maternal and Infant Health Care Act, both promulgated in 1994, have made further provisions for the protection of women's rights and interests.

Article 4

Paragraph 1

To ensure an appropriate proportion of women participating in political life, the Women's Act stipulates that there should be an appropriate number of women deputies to the National People's Congress and People's Congresses at all levels. The numbers of women deputies should be gradually increased to ensure a steady rise in the level of women's political participation.

To protect women's rights and interests from possible infringement, many localities have set up law firms and legal consulting centres to provide legal services in cases where women have been victimized.

A maternity-safeguard system has been established. This system was introduced to counter the practice of certain employers who were reluctant to hire women because of the possibility of their becoming pregnant and bearing children. This system has been incorporated into national legislation; it is being implemented in State-owned enterprises and will be gradually extended to other enterprises.

These special practices have played an important role in protecting the lawful rights and interests of women in China, and can be expected to continue to do so for a considerable time to come.

Paragraph 2

China's laws and regulations contain many special measures for the protection of mothers, covering pregnancy, childbirth, employment, retirement and death. The State also adopts special policies and measures with respect to healthy, sick or disabled mothers. For old, widowed and disabled mothers in particular, the Civil Affairs Department of the Government and the women's work units and neighbourhood committees take on the duty of providing special care and assistance. This is not only in response to State policies and legislation, but also an expression of the humanitarian tradition long cherished by Chinese society.

In 1994, the China Population Welfare Foundation, the China Family Planning Association and other organizations jointly launched "Project Well-being", aimed at poverty alleviation through development for poor mothers. More than 400 poor women have benefited from this project since 1995. In 1996, the project targeted poor mothers in 14 counties on the basis of the four counties aided during the previous year. Enjoying the enthusiastic support of the general public, "Project Well-being" has since received donations from hundreds of thousands of people. Beginning in 1996, some organizations have planned to aid poor mothers through certain "counterpart relief" schemes.

Article 5

(a) China's mass media have always endeavoured to present Chinese women in a positive light, reporting on their role and accomplishments in the country's economic and social development and depicting them as independent and dedicated to their careers, in order to emphasize their value to society. The country's 123 women's newspapers and periodicals in particular have duly contributed to the development and progress of women. In their reports, they emphasize the creation of a new image of womanhood and depict successful women entrepreneurs and scientists and other positive role models for women. They advocate the spirit of "four selfs": self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, with emphasis on ideological, ethical and educational progress. They give priority to the social role of women and combat traditional stereotypes while vigorously advocating gender equality. They represent women's interests by reflecting women's aspirations and safeguard women's lawful rights and interests whenever there is discrimination against women - for example, in college admissions, job assignments for university graduates and the promotion of cadres. Indeed, eight months' continuous coverage of these subjects by Chinese Women's Daily prompted the relevant government departments to formulate regulations supporting gender equality.

Yet despite their commendable role in presenting a positive image of women, the mass media have not done enough to publicize women's contributions to and role in society. Moreover, audio-visual and other electronic publications that depict sexual violence and degrade female characters have made aggressive inroads in the cultural marketplace in China's large and medium-size cities in recent years. To eliminate such media-based biases against women and their negative social influence, the Chinese Government and legislative bodies have taken a series of measures, including the adoption of the Advertisement Act of the People's Republic of China at the Tenth Session of the Eighth National

People's Congress in April 1994. Article 2 of that Act stipulates that advertisements shall not contain elements that are gender discriminative, pornographic, terrifying, violent or obscene. China Central Television (CCTV) has also taken concrete steps to increase coverage of successful women; one of its programmes on women, entitled "Half the sky", has been warmly received by the public. In recent years, the Chinese Government has staged annual crackdowns on illegal and pornographic publications and audio-visual products, attacking criminals, purifying the social environment and expanding the market for healthy cultural works.

The Chinese Government advocates the sharing of household chores and child-rearing by husband and wife. Since the beginning of reform and opening up in particular, with rapid economic growth and the overall rise in the educational level of the population, the concepts of gender equality, equality between husband and wife and equality of all family members have taken deeper root in the collective consciousness. The sense of the shared responsibility of husband and wife for household chores and child-rearing has also been strengthened, as the trend towards sharing the internal and external aspects of the family's life gains momentum. For many years, China has conducted the "Five 'Civil Goods' Families" programme in both rural and urban areas, promoting a new healthy, scientific and civil family lifestyle by obtaining broad public support for mutual assistance between spouses and for shared housework and child-rearing. To date, more than 80 million such families have received this honour. This and other activities have played a positive role in enhancing the overall calibre of family members, promoting the sharing of housework by husbands and wives, and improving family stability.

(b) With respect to the social function of mothers and the joint responsibility of parents for bringing up children, the Chinese Government has organized parents' schools to educate parents in the responsibility and knowledge of parenting (mentioned in the second report). At the same time, such other activities as the "Five 'Civil Goods' Families" programme have enabled the entire society to gain an understanding of the social function of mothers and the sharing of housework and child-rearing responsibilities. Moreover, the establishment of the Childbearing Fund, a public financing scheme under which expectant mothers can obtain benefits, highlights the recognition of society's responsibility towards motherhood. Some mass organizations have also held contests to select outstanding parents as a way to promote the concept of shared child-rearing.

As to giving top priority to the interests of mothers and children under any circumstances, the Women's Act and the Inheritance Act contain the following provisions: a husband may not file for divorce while his wife is pregnant or nursing; when parents divorce, the law gives special protection to the interests of the minor children, who have the right to choose, of their free will, to live with either parent; and if both parents are deceased, their children have the right to inherit their property.

Article 6

The laws and regulations of China ban trafficking in women and forced prostitution, and regard such as criminal acts.

In 1989, the State Council issued a circular on resolutely combating the abduction and sale of women and children.

In 1991, at its Twenty-first Session, the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People's Congress adopted a decision to punish criminals guilty of abducting, selling and kidnapping women and children and a decision to severely punish prostitution.

The Women's Act promulgated in 1992 contains provisions prohibiting the abduction, sale and kidnapping of women and banning the organization, forcing, inducement, accommodation and introduction of women to engage in prostitution.

In recent years, China's law enforcement agencies have stepped up their fight against trafficking in women and forced prostitution in the context of a comprehensive rectification of public order. With the cooperation of broad segments of society, such criminal activities have been brought under effective control. The number of cases involving the abduction and sale of persons has declined nationwide. Cases of abuse of women have declined, and some of the worst cases have been dealt with in a timely fashion.

Article 7

China's Constitution provides that all citizens of the People's Republic of China who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for elections regardless of ethnic status, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious belief, education, property status or length of residence. The percentage of women's participation in elections has been steadily rising for decades, and currently stands at over 95 per cent nationwide. To ensure a continued increase in women's political participation, the relevant government agencies have developed specific measures aimed at training and selecting more qualified women cadres in the course of reform and liberalization. From 1990 onwards, they have sponsored numerous meetings on the need to have women cadres in senior positions in county and township Governments, and to have at least one woman cadre in the leadership of the provincial, autonomous regional and municipal Governments. Thanks to these efforts by the Government and society, as a whole, the percentage of women's political participation has increased remarkably and a large number of women cadres have assumed leadership positions. At present, China has 12.7 million women cadres, or 33 per cent of the total. The number of women cadres in various senior positions has also increased.

The Chinese Government has taken the following measures to ensure a steady increase in the level of women's political participation:

1. Plans emphasizing the training of women cadres

Since the 1990 meetings of relevant State bodies on the selection and training of women cadres, Governments at all levels have made this task a part of their day-to-day agendas and periodically reviewed the results of the gradual implementation. More than 20 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly administered by the central Government have currently formulated plans for the selection and training of women cadres, and some localities have even worked out 5-year or 10-year programmes for this purpose and incorporated them into their regular work schedules.

2. Training of women cadres

Enhancing the professional capacities of women cadres is a prerequisite for their entry into higher decision-making echelons. Special training schools for cadres have been set up by both the central and local Governments. Many government branches and large enterprises have established their own institutes in which cadres may study politics and professional knowledge. Women cadres are regularly sent to these schools on various courses, and are appointed or promoted as key personnel after graduation.

3. Setting targets for ensuring women's political participation at specific levels

Setting quotas for women's political participation is a workable measure for ensuring women's right to political participation. This is particularly necessary when gender equality has not been fully realized. During elections of people's deputies at the county and township levels in 1990, for example, the National People's Congress and other departments issued a circular requiring that at least 20 per cent of the candidates should be women. As a result, over 21 per cent of the deputies elected (25 per cent in some provinces) were women.

4. Establishment of a women's talent bank

As important resources for training and providing women cadres, the All-China Women's Federation and its branches at various levels have actively embraced the task of advising all levels of government and establishing a bank of women's talent. With the resulting information networks and files, they can quickly identify and recommend talented and qualified women cadres to government organizations and enterprises.

China has a large number of women's non-governmental organizations and associations. The Women's Federation alone has more than 5,800 members. The All-China Women's Federation, as China's largest non-governmental organization, is widely regarded by both the Government and people as the bridge that brings China's women together. Its membership includes deputies to People's Congresses at various levels, members of national and regional committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), government staff, scientific and technological personnel and social workers, all of whom are directly involved in the formulation and study of government policies and articulate in timely fashion the views and aspirations of women. Women deputies to People's Congresses and women members of CPPCC committees have tabled resolutions and

recommendations on such issues as national and regional legislation for the protection of women's rights and interests, women's employment, the retirement age for senior women intellectuals and work assignments for female university graduates, some of which have been adopted and implemented.

Article 8

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to women's participation in international affairs. All of its official delegations to international or regional conferences have women members. In addition to attending the annual sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, the Conference on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other specialized agencies of the United Nations system, from 1992 to 1996 Chinese women participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the World Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit on Social Development and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). To prepare for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Chinese women delegates took part in all regional governmental and non-governmental preparatory meetings. Of the 81 members of the Chinese Government's delegation to the Conference, 66 were women.

Of the total 1,200 women in China's diplomatic corps, there are nine ambassadors, accounting for 5.92 per cent of China's total serving ambassadors. According to statistics, since the foundation of the People's Republic, 27 Chinese women have served as the country's ambassadors. Chinese women also hold jobs in the United Nations system and other international agencies.

Article 9

According to China's Nationality Act, drafted in 1980, all Chinese citizens, male or female, as well as their children, enjoy equal rights to acquire, renounce and restore their nationality.

Article 10

China's Constitution, laws and regulations stress and guarantee that women enjoy equal rights with men in the area of education. Such equal rights apply, inter alia, to school enrolment, promotion to higher educational levels, post-graduation work assignments, awarding of academic degrees, continued education in foreign countries. The Chinese Government is developing women's education on a broad scale. In regular formal education, the State is taking vigorous steps to increase the enrolment and attendance rates of female students as well as their rates of promotion to higher levels. Free schools or classes exclusively for girls are being set up in remote, poor and minority-inhabited regions. The Chinese Government pays close attention to ensuring women's enjoyment of the right to education, regarding it a key link in raising the calibre of the country's population and promoting the overall advancement of Chinese society.

In recent years, China's education of girls has made substantial progress through such measures as providing a legal framework for education, mobilizing

community participation and utilizing multiple channels for fund-raising. In 1995, the enrolment rate for China's school-age children at the elementary level was 98.5 per cent, with the rate for girls reaching 98.2 per cent. The gender differential in this regard decreased from 4.6 percentage points in 1985 to just 0.66 percentage point by the end of 1995. The proportion of female students in secondary, tertiary and postgraduate education institutions has reached 47.3 per cent, 35.4 per cent and 24.8 per cent, respectively. The Chinese Government also stresses adult education, vocational education and literacy education for women. China now has 1,679 women's secondary vocational schools and 3 women's vocational universities with more than 60 specialized courses of study suitable for women students. More than 13 million women are now studying in adult education institutions.

In response to the education problems of girls in poor regions, the Compulsory Education Act, the Women's Act, the Protection of Minors Act and the Programme of Reform and Development of China's Education, all promulgated in recent years, contain explicit provisions and measures concerning the education of girls. Governments at both the central and local levels have adopted policies and measures designed to promote the education of girls. In some regions, efforts are being made to encourage planning, financial, educational and civil affairs agencies to work together, pooling resources from families, schools and communities at large to promote the education of girls. The All-China Women's Federation and the Children's Foundation of China have jointly launched the "Spring Bud Programme" designed to help female school drop-outs with contributions from broad sectors of society. The programme succeeded in bringing more than 100,000 girls back to school in 1994 and 1995 alone.

The Chinese Government also attaches importance to the moral intellectual and physical development of students. The concept of gender equality is incorporated in school textbooks of all kinds. Students whose performance is outstanding enjoy equal access to scholarships and subsidies, irrespective of gender. More than 280,000 parents' schools have been set up to educate parents about child care and education, as well as other relevant topics, such as family planning.

Article 11

The Chinese Government has consistently given priority to protecting women's labour rights and interests. Since the founding of the People's Republic, and especially since the beginning of the period of reform and opening up, China has adopted a large number of laws and regulations in this area, such as the Regulations concerning Placement of Surplus Workers in State-Owned Enterprises, the Regulations concerning Labour Protection for Women Workers, the Regulations concerning the Range of Jobs Unsuitable for Women Workers, the Regulations concerning Health Care for Women Workers, and the Methods concerning Maternity Insurance of Enterprise Workers for Trial Implementation. These documents contain comprehensive provisions for the protection of women's labour rights and interests in such areas as employment, labour relations, wages, labour protection and social insurance. The promulgation of the Women's Act in 1992 and of the Labour Code in 1994 has enhanced the scope of China's laws in this field, paving the way for better protection of women's equal rights with men in employment. At the same time, labour departments at various levels have

paid close attention to the implementation of labour-related laws and regulations by intensifying their supervision of employers' implementation of labour law provisions as well as the way they handle violations of the lawful rights and interests of women workers. The Government at various levels has also adopted a number of policy measures to help solve employment problems affecting women.

1. Equal employment opportunities

China's Constitution provides that women and men enjoy equal rights to employment. The new Labour Code further elaborates that "in recruiting workers, it is prohibited to refuse to recruit women or to raise criteria for the employment for women based on reasons of gender, except for types of work and posts identified by the State as being unsuitable for women". The Women's Act stipulates that "no employer units shall dismiss women workers or unilaterally revoke their labour contract on the ground of their marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave or nursing". With the steady improvement of laws concerning the protection of women's rights and interests and the rapid development of the country's economy, the number of working women has continuously increased and the scope of their employment expanded. Industries where women workers abound include manufacturing, farming, construction, transport and communications, trade, finance, insurance, business, health care and education.

2. The principle of equal pay for equal work and social insurance

In China, the principle of equal pay for equal work has been largely implemented. Workers in the same category of production with identical skills receive equal remuneration. The Women's Act also stipulates that men and women enjoy equal rights in housing assignments, welfare benefits and access to vocational training. Upon retirement, both men and women workers retain access to free health care and receive an old-age pension equal to 70-90 per cent of the original wage, depending on the length of employment.

3. Labour protection

The Chinese Government has adopted comprehensive labour protection measures in respect of women workers. It has stipulated that women may not engage in jobs physically unsuitable for them; that they are entitled to a 90-day maternity leave with pay (with some government agencies and industrial units extending the benefit up to six months); that pregnant and nursing women workers may have reduced workloads and working hours; and that enterprises with large numbers of women workers shall establish women's health clinics, special lounges for expectant mothers, nursing rooms, kindergartens and nurseries. With a view to mitigating the housework of women workers so that they can have more time for public affairs, great efforts have been made in recent years to steadily develop preschool education. As a result, by the end of 1995, China had some 180,000 kindergartens with a total enrolment of over 27.1 million children, 37.5 per cent more than in 1990.

4. Administrative and judicial protection

It is legally provided that when a labour dispute arises as a result of an employer's refusal to hire women workers, or of work assignments, the dismissal of workers or labour protection issues, the parties to the dispute may apply for arbitration by a dispute arbitration committee and, if not satisfied with the result, may file suit in the People's Court to obtain a judicial settlement. Employers found guilty of violating regulations protecting women's employment shall be dealt with by government labour agencies and, in cases of injury to the women's interests, the employer in question shall provide compensation. If the circumstances of the injury are serious enough to constitute a crime, the law enforcement agencies shall investigate the criminal liability of the perpetrator.

5. Active reform of the maternity insurance system

The Women Workers' and Employees' Labour Protection Regulations promulgated by the State Council in 1988 reformed the maternity insurance scheme by extending maternity leave. Subsequently, a number of pilot projects involving public-pooling of resources for this purpose were implemented under the guidance of the Ministry of Labour. In 1994 the Ministry, in conjunction with the All-China Women's Federation, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and other organizations, drafted the Proposed Methods for Maternity Insurance of Enterprise Workers, which went into effect on 1 January 1995. The Methods provide that insurance resources be publicly pooled, with enterprises surrendering maternity premiums, calculated according to a fixed percentage of a worker's wages, to designated insurers to establish a maternity insurance fund. Maternity benefits consist of a maternity allowance, maternity leave with pay and health care. By presenting their maternity certificates, women workers may obtain maternity allowances from the designated insurers and have their maternity-related health care expenses reimbursed. The pay for women workers on maternity leave is fixed at the level of the enterprise's monthly average in the previous year and disbursed by the Fund. This reform has been introduced in two thirds of China's provinces (municipalities).

6. Vocational retraining for women workers who have been made redundant

Generally speaking, China's reform and liberalization has accelerated economic growth and created more jobs and opportunities for women. However, owing to the revamping of enterprises and industrial restructuring, some workers have become redundant, while others have been laid off because their technical skills were not up to the needs of modernized production and a changing market. As a result of their disadvantaged educational and technical background, women make up a larger share of those laid off. This poses a serious challenge to the Chinese Government.

To help solve this problem, the Government has adopted a number of policies. For example, the Regulations concerning the Placement of Surplus Workers in State-owned Enterprises, promulgated by the State Council, stipulate that women workers may be granted leave of up to two years during pregnancy and nursing if they apply for it. They will be paid regular wages during official maternity leave and living expenses thereafter. Governments at various levels

have formulated similar measures aimed at protecting the interests of women workers.

To help workers who have lost their jobs to become re-employed and thereby ensure that the reform process progresses smoothly, the Ministry of Labour launched the Re-employment Project in 1993. Its central task is to help laid-off workers find jobs as soon as possible by making use of policy support and other employment services, giving full play to government, enterprise and community initiatives, combining enterprise recruitment, self-employment and community-based placement schemes, and providing job orientation, job introduction, cross-training and other services. Governments at all levels and various sectors of society, including trade unions and women's organizations, have done much to help find jobs for laid-off workers, especially women workers, and achieved impressive successes. The main measures for re-employing women workers who have lost their jobs include:

1. Providing legal safeguards for women workers' right to work by adopting relevant laws and regulations. Among the detailed provisions for implementation of the Women's Act prepared by all levels of government is a paragraph affirming the right of women workers who have lost their jobs to be re-employed. The document for Heilongjiang Province, for example, contains a clearly worded provision that "enterprises, while transforming operational mechanisms or conducting labour reforms may not discriminate against or exclude women workers on any ground". The corresponding document for Shanghai Municipality also clearly stipulates that "people's Governments at all levels should endeavour through various channels to facilitate women's employment. All units are urged to recruit and hire middle-aged women for re-employment". Other provinces, cities and prefectures have formulated a variety of supportive policies from different angles to ensure re-employment of laid-off women workers, providing, inter alia, for post-employment training and assistance with living expenses.

2. Helping laid-off women workers acquire new skills for re-employment by providing a variety of multidisciplinary training programmes at different levels. In the light of their specific circumstances and social needs, various localities have introduced occupational training courses. The Tangshan Municipal Trade Union, for example, has joined women workers' organizations in setting up a women workers' training base, helping enterprises at the grass-roots level set up more than 200 night schools for laid-off women workers, with an enrolment rate of up to 94 per cent. Many laid-off women workers find jobs the same year they receive the training. Shanghai has organized a large number of training courses for computer-related, foreign language, accounting and secretarial positions. Thanks to the close match between the contents of training programmes and social needs, the women trainees' chances for re-employment have been greatly enhanced. The re-employment rate of women trainees in Shanghai is as high as 80 per cent, while the rate for Heilongjiang Province is 66 per cent.

3. Arranging for direct placement of laid-off women workers by developing tertiary (service) industry. In Liaoning Province, for example, 5,122 household service companies have been established, along with 3,672 catering and garment facilities, 2,013 processing centres, 2,290 nurseries or kindergartens, 5,321

other services and 2,565 economic entities of different kinds. A large number of laid-off women workers have been re-employed as a result. Taking advantage of their status as mass organizations, women's federations at various levels, have actively developed the services industry and built a large number of economic entities and service facilities targeted at women, children and the general public, creating jobs for many laid-off women workers in the process.

Article 12

Paragraph 1

1. China has continued to upgrade its maternity and children's health-care services since the early 1990s, resulting in a general improvement in women's and children's health. By 1995, China had 349 medical facilities devoted to maternal and child health care, 49 gynaecological and obstetric hospitals, 2,832 maternal and child-care clinics and 35 children's hospitals. The country's 14,000 general hospitals above the county level are equipped with gynaecological and paediatric departments. In addition, China has more than 2,000 service centres which specialize in providing family-planning information and guidance. From 1991 to 1993, 515 county-level maternal and child health-care facilities were expanded, innovated or rebuilt. The entire network of maternal and child health care now consists of 200,000 professionals, 340,000 rural women doctors and 350,000 midwives.

In 1990, China began to implement the Programme to Strengthen Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning Services at the Grass-roots Level in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The programme covers 305 counties in remote, minority-inhabited and old liberated areas in 27 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, serving a combined population of 120 million. Total investment consisted of an international grant of US$ 27 million and 320 million yuan renminbi in supporting funds raised by Chinese government authorities at all levels. This project was designed to provide training in stages for over 360,000 rural doctors for a five-year period, and to provide motor vehicles and equipment to the maternal and child health-care facilities in the 24 poor regions covered by the programme. In addition, the Chinese Government has undertaken a comprehensive programme of maternal and child health care with a loan from the World Bank, a project designed to improve women's and children's health facilities in 295 counties with 90 million people.

With a view to protecting women and children's rights to health, the Eighth NPC adopted at its Tenth Session in October 1994 the Maternal and Infant Health Care Act of the People's Republic of China, which entered into force on 1 June 1995.

Since the strategy for the development of maternal and child health care was formulated and related measures have been implemented, the health standard of China's women and children has improved steadily. As of 1995, 90 per cent of expectant mothers in cities and 65 per cent in the countryside enjoyed access to prenatal check-ups, and 84.1 per cent of deliveries were attended by trained midwives and doctors. The country's maternal mortality rate now stands at 61.9 per 100,000 and the infant mortality rate at 36.4 per cent. The average

breastfeeding rate has increased to 64.4 per cent. The life expectancy of Chinese women is now 72 years, 7 years longer than the United Nations target of 65 years by the year 2000.

The key prerequisite for attaining the goal set by China's programme of maternal and child health care by the year 2000 is to bring down the mortality rates for mothers, infants and children under five. To this end, the Chinese Government has adopted the following measures:

Raising the quality of obstetric departments of urban and rural hospitals and increasing the hospitalized delivery rate in rural areas;

Improving the skills of midwives through strengthened training in poor and isolated areas;

Promoting breastfeeding and baby-friendly actions throughout the country;

Setting up 3,000 baby-friendly hospitals and 50 baby-friendly districts and counties; and

Ensuring a breastfeeding rate of 30 per cent by the year 2000.

Over the years, women's non-governmental organizations in China have been constructive in helping to formulate policies and laws on women's health and popularizing related programmes and measures. In 1991, the All-China Women's Federation sponsored a national women's health knowledge contest which attracted tens of millions of participants. In 1992, the Federation carried out a promotional activity in 21 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities aimed at strengthening scientific research on maternal health. In 1994, the Federation again conducted a survey on maternal health in eight suburban districts of Beijing, not only increasing its own understanding of the health situation of Chinese women but also providing useful information to Government health agencies.

Paragraph 2

The Maternal and Infant Health Care Act stipulates that health services shall be provided to women and mothers at the premarital, pre-pregnancy, prenatal and postnatal stages and to infants and young children.

Premarital health services include premarital health instruction, counselling and physical check-ups. Prenatal health services include maternal and infant health education, maternal health care, foetal and neonatal care as well as guidance on safe delivery, balanced nutrition and breastfeeding. In accordance with article 14 of this Act, pregnant women and women in childbirth should be given counselling and instruction in health, nutrition, psychological and other issues, as well as regular prenatal medical check-ups and other services. Article 24 requires medical and health care facilities to provide new mothers with instructions on scientific child-rearing, balanced nutrition and breastfeeding.

Article 13

Subparagraphs (a), (b) and (c) of this article have been dealt with in previous reports, and the relevant information remains unchanged.

An additional note with regard to subparagraph (b): Women are allowed to apply for and obtain loans from national banks and credit cooperatives. Some non-governmental organizations, including women's federations, are also involved in such activities, for example, when they engage in remunerative activities in poor regions with loans earmarked for poverty alleviation. "Project Well-being", mentioned earlier, is designed to provide interest-free or preferential loans to poor mothers out of contributions from broad sectors of society with a view to helping these women shake off poverty as quickly as possible.

Article 14

Over the years, the Chinese Government has consistently pushed for the education and training of rural women. The literacy campaign, with emphasis on reducing the number of illiterate women by organizing night schools and winter schools, dates back to the 1950s. Agricultural knowledge and skills are always on the curricula of these schools. As agriculture has developed, rural women have enjoyed greater access to education owing to the establishment of a variety of regular schools and agricultural technology centres in rural areas. With the introduction of the household contract responsibility system in the 1980s, women have become independent land contractors and primary producers. In order to enhance their capabilities and thus enable them to play an even greater role in agricultural production, the All-China Women's Federation, with extensive support from government agencies and mass organizations, launched a campaign among rural women in 1989 to promote the study of culture and technology as well as competition in accomplishment and contribution. More than 120 million rural women have since participated in this campaign, with more than 90 million of them having learned one or two production skills. What is more, as a result of this campaign, 15,000 women have attained provincial-level expert status, 510,000 women have been certified as technicians and more than 1 million households headed by women have been rated as "special agricultural technology households". More than 20 million women have learned how to read and write. This campaign has done much to enhance the role of women in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, sideline occupations and fishery and has made them a key force in rural development. At present, women make up 70 per cent of the workforce in crop farming and animal husbandry, between one third to one half of the 14 million rural service personnel and 40 per cent of the employees in rural and township enterprises.

Article 15

Paragraph 1

The Women's Act, the Protection of Disabled Persons Act, the Protection of Minors Act, the Maternal and Infant Health Care Act and the Labour Protection Act, all promulgated after 1989, contain provisions which highlight the equality between men and women before the law.

Paragraph 2

Article 29 of the Women's Act stipulates that the lawful rights and interests of women in joint ownership relations, as well as in marriage and the family, shall not be infringed.

Article 31 stipulates that the equality of women's and men's rights to property inheritance is protected by law. Widows have the right to dispose of inherited property, a right that may not be infringed by anyone.

Article 44 stipulates that, in the case of divorce, the living quarters jointly rented by the husband and wife shall be divided by mutual agreement.

Paragraph 3

The Chinese Government agrees with this provision and has acted accordingly.

Paragraph 4

The Chinese Government does not place restrictions on the movement of persons or choice of residence. However, it has formulated methods for management of the transient population with a view to ensuring their legitimate rights to work, life and study. For example, a "non-residents' service centre" was established in Shanghai to give needed assistance with employment, study and living arrangements to newly arrived non-residents, including such services as arranging for accommodation, meals, recreation, education and administrative formalities. Schools catering for migrant workers have been set up offering legal courses, remedial general education courses and training in practical skills.

Article 16

The contents of this article are dealt with in the Marriage Act and the Women's Act. In recent years, a growing number of local laws and regulations relevant to this article have been enacted and include the following:

(a) Zhejiang Province has enacted laws to prohibit arranged marriages, mercenary marriages and other forms of interference with the freedom of marriage.

(b) Article 35 of the Methods for Implementing the Women's Act in Qinghai Province stipulates that women's right to marriage freedom is protected by law and that arranged or mercenary marriages, as well as the seizure of property in the name of marriage, are prohibited. Jiangxi Province has laws prohibiting anyone, including members of a woman's family, from exerting pressure on her and violating or otherwise depriving her of her right to marriage freedom.

(c) Hubei Province has laws requiring that when a divorce is registered, both parties must be present to express their respective views; the case must be examined carefully and adjudicated in accordance with the Marriage Act.

(d) The Methods for Implementing the Women's Act in Liaoning Province stipulate that parents have equal rights to guardianship of their minor children. When cases involving child-rearing are handled, the interests of the mother shall be accommodated in the context of the children's best interest.

(e) The Liaoning Methods also require that the relevant government agencies should provide safe, reliable and effective contraceptive devices and techniques.

(f) Anhui Province has local regulations which require that husband and wife, having equal status in the family, respect and love each other.

(g) The local laws of Hainan Province stipulate that husband and wife have equal rights to dispose of their family property and that women enjoy the same rights as men to an inheritance.

PART III

In accordance with paragraph 323 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a report submitted by a State party under article 18 of the Convention should include information on measures taken to implement the Platform for Action. The principal actions adopted by the Chinese Government in this regard are as follows:

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to women's development and progress, taking gender equality as a basic State policy aimed at promoting social development. Soon after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Chinese Government began to translate its solemn commitments into concrete actions. In keeping with the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000), and taking into account the areas of concern and strategic goals of the Platform for Action, the State Council Working Committee on Women and Children held a meeting on 26 October 1995 of senior officials of central government ministries and provincial Governments which focused on the implementation of the Programme and follow-up activities to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The meeting asked the authorities to formulate plans for women's development in their localities and departments and to incorporate them into their overall social and economic development programmes. It also asked the authorities to ensure adequate human, material and financial resources for the implementation of the Programme and Platform for Action.

In accordance with the objectives of the Programme and the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, many government agencies have identified their specific priority areas for development. For example:

The Ministry of Labour has proposed that various measures should be taken to guide enterprises to vigorously develop areas and forms of employment suitable for women, provide more job opportunities for them and ensure that the rate of growth in women's employment is not lower than that for men. It has also called for greater development of rural and township enterprises, thereby creating more jobs for rural women. Efforts should be made to promote women's

development in remote, poor and ethnic minority-inhabited regions. The proportion of women trainees in pre-employment training programmes should be maintained at above 50 per cent, while literacy and production-skills training should be completed for 10 million women in poor regions.

The State Education Commission has decided to give priority consideration to women's education in formulating both education development programmes and annual plans. It also intends to make further efforts to introduce policy incentives for the development of women's education, including the enactment and refinement of laws, regulations, policies and measures in this regard.

The Ministry of Public Security is determined to give top priority to protecting the lawful rights and interests of women and children. Effective measures should be taken to combat such criminal acts as the abduction, trafficking in, abandonment, persecution and degradation of women, as well as on such social evils as prostitution, while demonstrating a strong commitment to rescuing victims of abduction and re-educating prostitutes.

The Ministry of Public Health has called for a rational utilization of resources by ensuring necessary support for maternal and child health care through adequate human, financial and material inputs, particularly in remote, poor, minority-inhabited and old revolutionary-base areas where preferential funding schemes and policies are needed. The establishment and perfection of women's and children's health-care facilities should be strengthened, and the training of grass-roots health workers should be increased with a view to steadily raising the capacity and calibre of the service providers. The service requirements of different population groups should be studied carefully, and a broadened and multi-level health service should be provided.

In the meantime, Chinese women of all nationalities and social strata, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations, have rallied behind the implementation of both the Programme and Platform for Action by formulating their own plans. For example, the All-China Women's Federation, drawing on its unique characteristics and advantages, has introduced a series of women's actions to promote implementation of the Programme. For example, by organizing various literacy and production-skills training courses, developing family-courtyard economic activities and launching poverty-alleviation projects, the Federation intends to help 1 million women meet their basic food and clothing needs on a stable basis by the year 2000. It will also assist labour agencies in the implementation of women's re-employment programmes through better occupational training and an expanded service industry so that 1 million laid-off women workers can be re-employed. Women's federations at various levels should continue to cooperate with the relevant government agencies in working towards the goal of eliminating illiteracy for 3 million women each year, and promote the implementation of the Spring Bud Project by mobilizing all social sectors to provide financial assistance to help girls complete their schooling in order to ensure their right to education.

Implementation of the Programme will give concrete expression to China's basic policy of gender equality, and is also a major follow-up action to the Fourth World Conference on Women. To maximize social participation in this effort, the Working Committee on Women and Children under the State Council, in

conjunction with the Beijing municipal Government, held a rally attended by nearly 4,000 people on 13 May 1996 as an opening to a month-long publicity campaign (mid-May to mid-June) on behalf of the Programme. Large-scale publicity-related consulting services were provided after the rally.

Throughout the year following the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Chinese Government at various levels did a great deal to follow up on the implementation of the Programme and Platform for Action. Many provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly administered by the central Government also formulated women's development programmes for their respective localities.